



## 2024 Executive Board Election Candidate

### Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

**Name:** Ning Deng

**Title:** Director of College Counseling

**Institution:** Beijing BISS International School

**Location/Region:** China/East Asia

**Member Group:** Secondary (High School)

### All Applicant Questions

**Discuss your involvement with International ACAC, highlighting specific roles (with dates) and contributions made during your volunteer or leadership tenure.**

Most recently as representative member of IACAC's Executive Board from July 2021 to July 2023 and Advocacy & Outreach Committee member from July 2018 to July 2021, I have contributed to strategic plan discussions and other key meetings concerning IACAC's sustainable operation. As First-timer Committee Chair, I planned both virtual and on-site first timer sessions for IACAC's 2022 summer conference. Furthermore, I have been a key leader involved in planning the Regional Roundup for 2021, served as mentor of IACAC's inaugural mentor program, 2021-2022, and presented a variety of topics about transcripts, recommendation letters, essay writing, best practices, family expectations, current landscape of the Association and Profession as pre-conference faculty from 2021 to 2023. For IACAC conference sessions (2020-2022), I was co-presenter on diversity issues with global colleagues and lead presenter of regional landscape updates for China with nation-wide counselors from different international programs and admissions officers from US universities. I did the "Chatter that

Matters” conversation focusing on women’s leadership and its impact in college counseling and admissions in 2023, as well as IACAC Webinars such as “Town Hall Discussion for COVID- 19”, “Admissions Matters”, and on-going writings for the membership bulletin. I believe my past involvement shows I can contribute to the IACAC Executive Board further with my diverse voice, knowledge, skills, and experience.

**Identify and articulate a critical issue in college admissions for international students that you would like to or have championed, emphasizing its importance and potential impact on the community.**

A key issue of focus is how international student mobility and accessibility has been positively and negatively impacted by the US Supreme Court overturning of affirmative action policy in college admissions. I question whether college admissions decisions based solely on student strength, ability, passion, and skill without consideration of race will truly eliminate reverse discrimination, and whether this action may limit higher education chances for minorities who contribute to more diverse and inclusive campus environments and enrich perspectives in the classroom. The affirmative action policies often came with additional support services and resources that international students had benefited from, such as academic, cultural, and social integration programming that enhanced their sense of belonging and engagement on campus and expanded access to financial aid that secured funding for their education. Mobility and university access is certainly affected by this decision as affirmative action influenced admissions criteria, and its removal will affect international student admissions processes, changing their chances of acceptance or their ability to compete with domestic students when the SAT/ACT is used for academic evaluation. On the upside, university de-prioritization of racial or ethnic diversity may benefit international students from well-represented countries with exceptional test scores. I have and will spearhead further analysis on this issue’s impact.

**Detail additional experiences that have equipped you with skills and insights applicable to the position you're applying for, emphasizing transferable accomplishments.**

On NACAC’s 2019 Advocacy Day in Washington D.C., I elaborated on behalf of international student interests to federal legislators as an Illinois ACAC representative. In addition to sharing data and pre-prepared materials, I shared my

personal experience as an international graduate student in the U.S., helping to show legislators an actual international students' long-term social and economic contribution to the U.S. Opening the eyes of policy-makers to the consequences of changing student visa regulations is a key contribution of mine, aimed at sustaining a welcoming environment for international students. Personally impactful was being selected as "Inviting Visitor Leadership Program" fellow by the Department of State in 2016, as it recognized my voluntary contribution to free Education USA College Counselor Training programs and educational sessions in diverse regions across China. This training has played a significant role in opening access to US university options in China's underserved localities. As part of 2023 bursary discussions during Executive Board meetings, I was proud of my input on whom to sponsor for conference attendance funding that opened opportunities for underrepresented counselors to attend. Joining NACAC's NEXT program in 2023 was another milestone that enhanced my leadership skills and understanding of ethics and DEI issues, equipping me to better serve in leadership roles as I continue to advocate for the overlooked voices from our community.

**Outline your comprehension of the role you are applying for, specifying changes you'd like to implement while acknowledging current practices or programs you feel are effective.**

The DEI VP plays a vital role in driving positive, sustainable change within IACAC, ensuring that diversity, equity, and inclusion align with current and future practices. They advocate for diverse and inclusive environments not only on the Executive Board but for international students in their respective campuses. IACAC has initiated many good practices that have enhanced DEI within the organization, like our strategic plan that outlines specific goals and actions. On the Executive Board, I learned how to put these goals into practice when reviewing conference proposals, carefully considering and selecting innovative topics and ones of high quality that also reflected IACAC's global reach. I would continue implementing both short and long-term initiatives to increase representation from underrepresented groups on campuses, at our conferences, and on the Board. Collaborating within the organization to allocate more material support for underrepresented counselors in attending IACAC events would be my priority to ensure all members feel welcomed and included in decision-making processes. Expanding opportunities for diverse voices to be heard in safe spaces to express varied experiences, concerns, and suggestions is vitally important for IACAC's sustained global relevance. Training to increase awareness of DEI among members

with less cultural exposure to these principles through webinars and workshops would also be prioritized to enhance respectful dialogue among all members

**Describe your leadership philosophy and strategies for effectively managing and leading a volunteer committee, emphasizing communication, collaboration, and recognition.**

Learning from my prior experience within the Executive Board, I have and continue to be influenced by its great leadership team. I would like to enhance the following areas to manage and lead a volunteer committee effectively and respectfully. First, setting up a clear vision and specific goals would ensure that every volunteer understands the purpose and direction of the committee, aligning all efforts toward a common objective. Second, establishing open channels of communication would encourage transparency, active listening, and a fuller exchange of ideas. As a manager, I will constantly provide updates, clarify expectations, and promptly address any concerns that arise. Third, creating a process for collaborative decision-making helps lead a team with stronger motivation and productivity. Fostering a sense of ownership and engagement, I will encourage diverse perspectives in discussions and assign tasks and responsibilities based on individual strengths and interests. Fourth, I would recognize and appreciate all efforts and contributions by publicly recognizing individual and team achievements through multiple forms of acknowledgement, both big and small. Conflict resolution is another essential area to manage so as to maintain a positive team dynamic and prevent any roadblocks to meeting the committee's goals. I believe any sustained push towards DEI objectives should tailor these respectful approaches in leading the Committee and its team of volunteers.

**Explain how you would leverage the position to contribute to International ACAC's strategic plan, aligning your goals with the organization's three pillars: enhancing member experience globally, clarifying the international brand, and optimizing internal operations.**

During my term as representative on the Board, I became deeply familiar with the organization's strategic plan, including its mission, vision, and goals, and would identify specific DEI-related objectives that align with IACAC's three pillars. Towards enhancing member experience globally, I will ensure that underrepresented voices are heard and better represented by initiatives that promote DEI within expanded member interactions and programs. For clarifying the international brand, I will ensure that a commitment to diversity and inclusivity are clearly and specifically

reflected in the organization's communication materials. Moreover, I would effectively communicate DEI initiatives to members, stakeholders, and the wider community through regular newsletters and social media content. For improving internal operations, I will review internal policies and practices to identify areas, particularly decision-making processes, where diversity and inclusion can be strengthened. I will also collaborate with IACAC leaders to integrate DEI objectives and their enforcement through coordinated efforts across the organization. Because IACAC is founded upon its members and has a duty to serve these members, it is essential to seek bottom-up inputs and polling insights on DEI-related topics from members themselves. Several tools can be applied, such as conducting online surveys, focus groups, and building open feedback channels to better understand member needs and perspectives

**Share details about a notable contribution you have made in the field, underscoring its impact on the profession and industry. Highlight specific initiatives, programs, or leadership roles that showcase your commitment and expertise.**

My significant cumulative contributions to this field are rooted in my dedicated integration of IACAC resources and knowledge within the communities needing them most. Over the years, I continually shared, instructed, and presented invaluable IACAC information to standardize our professional field and add lasting school structures to promote a global college-going culture. From 2011 to 2016, I collaborated to bring nearly one hundred US admissions officers to China for school visits, pioneering efforts to opening up China and narrowing the information gap so students could hear directly from universities. When chairing the First-timer Committee, planning both virtual and on-site sessions for IACAC's 2022 hybrid conference, I used my expertise to understand needs first-timer needs and guided them how to effectively utilize conference opportunities. Planning and coordinating both virtual and on-site sessions required a high-level of organizational and logistical skills where I built mutual trust among committee members through effective delegation. My involvement as mentor, presenter in countless webinars/conferences, regional conference planner, and pre-conference faculty over the past decade, and most recently my familiarity with IACAC's strategic plan as representative member of the Executive Board have also shown the trust that IACAC has placed in me as a result of my persistent efforts to integrate the tools and knowledge IACAC provides to areas of greatest impact.

**Share why you want to volunteer for a leadership role for International ACAC and why this particular position.**

I want to volunteer for the DEI leadership role due to my strong desire to give back to IACAC and its college admissions and counseling community. I have professionally benefited from its support and resources over the past decades and want to promote this organization's strengthened future through my expertise and diverse perspective. Serving in a leadership role provides opportunities to connect and collaborate with like-minded individuals towards this common goal of a stronger, more resilient IACAC that welcomes all voices from first-timer members to well-respected IACAC executives. My belief in the importance of equal opportunities and representation for all individuals, including international students and their global advocates within and beyond the U.S. arises from my background in China, where I have served diverse secondary schools with complex curriculum structures, both affluent and high financial-need students, and resource rich urban schools and in-need rural ones. In each setting, I have become a competent integrator of IACAC resources in meeting uniquely different needs. I believe this adaptability will be key in the DEI position. Creating an inclusive and fairer feedback environment accessible to all members, better balancing the interests of underrepresented members at the Executive level is my goal for IACAC, and I believe I can strengthen this organization that has played such a pivotal role in my own professional journey